United Nations A/62/955

General Assembly

Distr.: General
15 September 2008
English
Original: Spanish

Sixty-second session
Agenda items 21 and 71 (a)

Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Letter dated 8 September 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the statement issued on 6 September 2008 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba concerning note verbale No. 646 of 3 September from Thomas Shannon, Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs of the United States Department of State, addressed to the Head of the Cuba Interests Section in Washington (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda items 21 and 71 (a).

(*Signed*) Rodrigo **Malmierca Díaz**
Permanent Representative
Permanent Mission of Cuba to the United Nations

08-50667 (E) 180908 180908

Annex to the letter dated 8 September 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cuba

6 September 2008

Last Wednesday, 3 September, at 4.45 p.m., the Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, Thomas Shannon, transmitted to the Head of the Cuba Interests Section in Washington note verbale No. 646, expressing "deepest regret for the destruction caused by hurricane Gustav" and stating that the United States would be prepared to "offer immediate and initial humanitarian assistance of relief supplies to the Cuban people through an appropriate international relief organization".

An identical note was later sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by the United States Interests Section in Havana.

In that note, the Government of the United States also requests the Government of Cuba to "allow a United States humanitarian assessment team to visit Cuba to inspect the affected areas to properly assess damage".

On Saturday, 6 September, at 8.55 a.m., the Ministry of Foreign Affairs transmitted to the Department of State through the Cuba Interests Section in Washington, and simultaneously to the United States Interests Section in Havana, note No. 1866 conveying its appreciation for the expressions of regret by the Government of the United States at the destruction caused in Cuba by hurricane Gustav.

The note states further that Cuba does not require the assistance of a humanitarian assessment team to assess damage and needs, as it has a sufficient number of specialists, who have almost concluded that task.

The note of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also states that if the Government of the United States genuinely wishes to cooperate with the Cuban people in the face of the tragedy of the hurricane, it is should allow the sale of essential materials to Cuba and suspend the restrictions that prevent United States companies from offering private commercial credits to Cuba for the purchase of food in the United States.

A widespread public debate has begun in the United States over the past few hours about the position that the Government of the United States should adopt in the face of the severe damage caused by hurricane Gustav in Cuba.

During the afternoon of 4 September, the Democratic presidential candidate, Barack Obama, requested the suspension, for no less than 90 days, of restrictions on travel and the sending of remittances and assistance to family members in Cuba by Cuban residents in the United States.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs considers that restrictions on travel and remittances by residents of Cuban origin in the United States should never have been imposed. It is not Cuba but the United States that deprives persons of Cuban origin of this right.

If these rights were restored to Cubans for humanitarian reasons, there would be no way to justify the maintenance of this prohibition, which is equally unjust and discriminatory, for United States citizens.

Today, even as a hurricane watch has been issued in the eastern part of the country as a result of the threat posed by hurricane Ike, which is as powerful as Gustav, Cuba reiterates that the only correct and ethical course of action that would be respectful of international law and of the near unanimous will of the United Nations General Assembly, would be a complete and permanent end to the stringent and cruel economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed against our nation for nearly half a century, including the harassment of Cuban commercial and financial operations in third countries which, according to conservative estimates, causes annual damages greater than those caused by hurricane Gustav.